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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 008810

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SUBJECT: JAMMU AND KASHMIR EARTHQUAKE MONITORING VISIT

Summary

11. A Regional Advisor from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and a representative from USAID/Delhi conducted a post-earthquake visit to Srinagar in Jammu & Kashmir from 15-16 November in order to monitor program progress of USAID/OFDA-funded partners. Due to security concerns, the USAID team shortened its visit and requested partner meetings to be held at the Intercontinental Hotel.

12. The initial relief phase, focused on the distribution of tents, winter clothing, blankets and family survival kits, is nearly finished. Partners with longer-term programming are now in the second stage of relief operations. This phase entails the construction of transitional shelter, technical assistance and provision of tools, health services, school supplies and psychological-social care. Access to affected villages remains a major challenge due to poor weather, dangerous road conditions and check point delays under heightened security concerns. Despite this, national and local authorities continue to support relief efforts, primarily through the assistance of the Indian military. USAID/OFDA has provided \$604,216 to meet the above emergency needs in Jammu & Kashmir.

Relief Operations Continue Despite Deteriorating Security

13. The overall security situation has worsened in recent weeks, with increased incidents of shootings, explosions and grenade attacks. As such the USAID team took special precautions on the advice of the Regional Security Officer in New Delhi to travel with an armed escort and limit movement to the extent possible within Srinagar. Furthermore the team cut short its visit in light of increased violence upon their arrival. In an effort to ensure the ongoing safety of USAID partners, the team opted not to conduct any site visits that might jeopardize their neutrality since visits would require armed escorts. Restricted movements due to security concerns at the opening of relief access points along the Line of Control (LoC) also prevented a planned site visit.

14. The increase in violence has had implications on the provision of relief, though not to a significant degree. Partners reported longer delays at check points to and from earthquake-affected communities with the military keeping more detailed track of all movement in Jammu & Kashmir. These delays are partially due to the opening of relief distribution points along the LoC, which have led to temporary road closures.

15. Partners have not reported any direct threats to their safety under these circumstances, nor a desire to terminate program activities. It should be noted that two of the four NGOs funded by USAID/OFDA, CARE and World Vision (WV), have nearly completed their activities and are in the process of closing operations. These partners were newcomers to the region. The remaining NGOs, Save the Children (SCF) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), have had longstanding presence in the region and plan to continue their work while exercising more caution. Both partners emphasized that the safety of their staff is in the forefront of all plans to deliver relief and that they are relying heavily on well-established Kashmiri and Indian military relationships and distribution linkages.

Reporting on USG Assistance

16. There appears to be a pervasive sense among the relief

community that the safety of their staff and effectiveness of relief operations are contingent upon maintaining a low profile in the region. Discussions therefore with the media have been at the discretion of the NGOs, some of which have released broad press statements from their respective headquarters but have not referenced funding sources. Post is looking at ways to highlight USG assistance in J&K without jeopardizing relief operations.

USAID/OFDA Relief Provided to Date

17. Catholic Relief Services has run a commendable relief program in partnership with the Consortium of Volunteer Agencies (COVA), a local organization consisting of many Muslim partners, and its traditional counterparts, CARITAS and Catholic Social Service Society (CSSS). To date CRS has provided relief to 2,380 families in 16 villages within Baramulla District. Furthermore through CSSS, mobile health teams have assisted more than 6,000 individuals. USG-supported relief through CRS includes health services, transitional shelter (including a cash-for-work component), school supplies and psychological-social care. A total of 4,000 families will be served by March 31, 2005 with \$170,000 from USAID/OFDA. Furthermore CRS is poised to help approximately 500 families beyond the LoC should an agreement be reached which enables them to provide cross border assistance.

18. Save the Children Fund has nearly completed its first phase of disaster relief in Uri of Baramulla District and Tangdhar of Kupwara Districts. Efforts have been made to first address emergency needs in the more inaccessible areas of Tangdhar. As of November 14, nearly all targets have been reached in this area, including the distribution of tents, plastic sheets, blankets, phirans (traditional jackets for adults and children) and kangrees (local wicker and clay heating pots). School supplies have also been dispatched to meet the needs of children and teachers. SCF is now concentrating on Uri to complete the provision of similar commodities. USAID/OFDA contributed \$134,278 toward SCF's relief efforts.

19. World Vision identified 500 families in need of tin sheeting in Tangdhar of Kupwara District. All beneficiaries will be reached by Friday, November 18th. These commodities are in higher demand now as communities are asking for materials that can be used for longer-term shelter. WV ran into some difficulties due to poor weather and dangerous road conditions in Tangdhar, however they are now in the process of program close-out. WV operated its program with a \$100,000 contribution from USAID/OFDA.

10. CARE reached 7,500 families as of November 14th. As a new partner in the region, CARE chose early on to work very closely with the Indian military; therefore it was able to move commodities quickly to targeted communities. Also CARE staff were present at distributions to ensure appropriate targeting. Blankets, tents, kangrees, phirans, and floor mats were delivered. CARE received \$100,000 from USAID/OFDA to help meet these emergency needs.

Government of India and other Relief Efforts

11. Indian military continue to play a major role in national and local government relief efforts, carefully tracking disaster relief activities to date. Per NGO sources, on November 6, the Army (56 RR) and Civil Administration, represented by the Divisional Commissioner, assigned villages to NGOs in order to facilitate relief efforts, prevent duplication and address gaps in assistance. The Divisional Commissioner is also working with UNDP to coordinate relief efforts. NGOs encountered by the team appeared to be very grateful for the Indian military's assistance, though there are some concerns on the part of NGOs about the military being so closely involved in the identification and selection of villages for relief, and there are concerns over what information is made available to the humanitarian community. Tracking and coordinating NGO activities, for example, has been challenging for partners, especially in the absence of maps.

12. Apart from the provision of tents and blankets, NGOs reported the primary focus of government officials is now compensation for damaged homes. Initially a policy was established to provide 100,000 rupees to affected families for the reconstruction of their homes. An additional 31,000 rupees are being distributed to meet temporary shelter needs, 25,000 of which is provided through a voucher system. Recipients are then able to exchange these vouchers for commodities at government-supported material depots. The Indian Government has also trained and placed

131 engineers in Tangdhar division to assist with reconstruction.

¶13. Beyond CARE, CRS, SCF and WV, there are few international NGOs present in Jammu & Kashmir. Action Aid, OXFAM, RedR, Medecins San Frontiers are the other key international organizations, alongside a host of national NGOs, UNICEF and UNDP. The focus remains on shelter needs, however programming is simultaneously being done in various other sectors, such as health, nutrition, education, psychological-social care, water and sanitation. USAID, ECHO and CIDA are supporting these humanitarian efforts in Jammu & Kashmir.

Conclusion

¶14. Together USAID/OFDA's Regional Advisor and USAID/Delhi are closely monitoring the security situation and related risks to relief staff and distributions. Partners have been advised to report on any security situation that merits USAID attention, and they continue to provide regular feedback pertaining to relief operations. The current funding level of \$604,216 will stand for the post-earthquake emergency phase. Activities under this emergency phase are expected to be completed by end March ¶2006.

BLAKE